Global Accessibility Day 2022 – XA Community Experiences

Community Mister Taxel May 19, 2022

Thursday, May 19 is Global Accessibility Awareness Day and we want to celebrate by sharing some perspectives from within the Xbox Ambassadors community. We invited interested Community Champions to share their personal experiences with disability and accessibility features in gaming, and asked about specific features they find particularly useful in their own gaming. Read on below to hear more about the individual experiences of SightlessKombat, Spoodly Phoenix, and CerebralPaul#921. If you're interested in learning more about how to make games more accessible or how to use accessibility features yourself, check out the helpful resources at the end of the article.

SightlessKombat

What would you like to share about your personal experiences with disability in gaming?

As a gamer without sight (having never had any sight whatsoever), though game accessibility is becoming more of a talking point, in my personal experience, I still feel I'm struggling to find mainstream games that are playable without any assistance whatsoever. Even when people ask me "what games would you recommend", my responses still have to be punctuated with "you'll need this piece of software to let someone control your game", "you'll need assistance to get things set up" or similar. That being said, I have also found that if you talk with and work with the right people, you can still have fun even when games aren't accessible or have unintended features that can assist you. Accessibility still has a long way to go, but I hope we see more games that are playable by a greater audience, including gamers without sight, far more frequently than we are currently.

What accessibility features in gaming are especially helpful for you?

Menu and UI narration (after all, how are you going to navigate to accessibility settings if you can't find your way through the menus), navigation assistance (whether through audio cues, camera orientation buttons or other methods) and clear telegraphing of enemy actions in the combat-heavy games I personally enjoy. Also though even things like making sure all your information reads in your menus so that you are not missing out just because you have no sight is crucial, as is audio description (though it hasn't been implemented in a released game directly at the time

of writing) to allow people to understand the visuals and style of your game in addition to , of course, what is going on in cutscenes etc.

What game or games would you like to highlight as having accessibility features that you use and appreciate? Is there a specific feature or experience you want to share to provide context?

While the game isn't by any means fully accessible yet, I'd like to shout out the crew at Rare for their continual efforts to make Sea of Thieves more and more accessible, including for gamers without sight like myself. Being able to jump into a crew, give a rough set of instructions and work through any issues from there, being up and sailing in a matter of minutes is much more preferable to what used to be the case, all thanks to the addition of accessibility features through numerous updates. One such feature is the addition of "fish name plate narration", which now means that I can tell what fish I'm going to catch before it even hooks onto the line. Such a small addition has been a massive boost to my fishing experience, developers should take note that the smallest of positive adjustments can have a huge impact on how accessible a game is and the amount of agency a player has, regardless of disability.

Spoodly Phoenix

What would you like to share about your personal experiences with disability in gaming?

I have not had a personal experience with disability in gaming, but a very close friend of mine did. Last year, my friend lost an arm, and thought they would never be able to play again. Thanks to some of the amazing Ambassadors, they were able to get information on the Adaptive Controller, once again allowing them to play the games they loved.

What accessibility features in gaming are especially helpful for you?

The feature I use the most often is subtitles. My hearing isn't 100%, so it's easy for me to miss some things said, especially under music/ambient noises, so subtitles are essential for me to get the full message. I've also noticed that my vision is getting worse as I get older, so I take advantage of any kind of text/UI scaling when a game offers it. I also take advantage of some motion sickness accessibility features whenever possible, such as turning off screen shake, blur, and bloom. While I do not suffer from motion sickness in games, these items often will set off chronic headaches (or worse), so turning them off in long sessions is essential for comfort.

What game or games would you like to highlight as having accessibility features that you use and appreciate? Is there a specific feature or experience you want to share to provide context?

One game that I enjoy features on is Halo Infinite. There are subtitles available, along with adjustable audio to make hearing speech easier. The UI text is also easy enough for someone with at least my vision level to see clearly, and another tool I've found even more helpful is the ability to change the friend/foe colors in multiplayer. Many games use green/blue and red for the identifiers, but Infinite lets you choose (purple/yellow for the win!).

CerebralPaul#921

What would you like to share about your personal experiences with disability in gaming?

Having grown up through the early stages of video gaming I never had expectations of features being included that would allow me to play any better than I was able, once that started happening I decided to use my voice in the gaming community to champion the cause. Now I want the option to play ALL the games

What accessibility features in gaming are especially helpful for you?

My difficulties are more about dexterity, motor control, and reaction times. So options like “single button press” instead of “quick tap” are very useful. The ability to adjust, or outright skip Quick time Events (QTE) have their place as well. One that doesn’t get utilized enough (in my opinion) is the ability to skip action sequences after multiple failures in narrative driven games.

What game or games would you like to highlight as having accessibility features that you use and appreciate? Is there a specific feature or experience you want to share to provide context?

The game I always go back to when asked this question is L.A. Noire was the game changer for me, it introduced the ability to skip action sequences after multiple failures and continue the story in narrative driven games. That was big, I was able to enjoy the story that in most games before I never could.

Learn More

To hear more from the Ambassadors who shared their experiences in this blog, follow the links to their Ambassador of the Month spotlights. Both SightlessKombat and CerebralPaul are regular hosts on the Xbox Ambassadors Twitch channel and we highly recommend checking out their content wherever you find it – including this excellent community accessibility panel they both featured on in October 2021. To learn more about accessibility in gaming, check out these articles and the many links within.

- Increasing our Focus on Inclusive Technology
- Creating for everyone: How to make more accessible games
- Xbox Celebrates the Gaming and Disability Community for Global Accessibility Awareness Day